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## SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE ARAMAIC ACTS

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Professor C. C. Torrey's recent monograph on *The Composition and Date of Acts* has placed in the hands of New Testament scholars a new and fascinating instrument for exegesis. By his demonstration of a document in Aramaic, underlying Acts 1 1b-15 35 and translated by Luke with painful fidelity into Greek, he has opened up a whole new field for the criticism of the book of Acts. Things which no sober critic would have dared to suggest on the basis of the Greek text alone become not only possible or plausible but even certain on the basis of the Aramaic. A few results of a reading of these chapters in the light of the new theory are here presented.

## I

The first turns merely on the meaning of a preposition. In Acts 1 2 the phrase *διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου* has troubled every commentator. Shall it be construed with *ἐντεταλόμενος*? Then the opening words of the Aramaic Acts (adopting Professor Torrey's very plausible suggestion that the book began with the word *בְּתַר*, "after," where Luke put his own *περί*, "concerning") will read: "After all that Jesus did and taught, up to the day when, having given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up," etc. But then the question arises, in what sense this command was given "by means of the Holy Spirit." Not *by communication of the Spirit*, the Spirit acting as mes-

senger and medium, since this is not promised till afterward. Hence Meyer, who defends this view, falls back on the somewhat abstruse conception of the Spirit as the peculiar possession of Jesus and the ultimate motive power of all his activity, so that this act of commandment, like all the acts of Jesus, is done "through the Spirit." It is the best explanation possible on the premises, but it leaves the passage rather vague and pointless. No reason is apparent for stressing the inspiration of Jesus at this point, and the statement becomes a sort of pious interjection almost comparable to the scribal formulæ of later times. Moreover, the content of the command is left entirely undetermined. There is no expressed object for ἐντειλάμενος, and conjectures have varied widely. Some have referred it to the baptismal command in Matt. 28. Calvin interpreted it of the preaching of the gospel as the Bezan interpolator had done long before him. Meyer, following Beza, again seeks safety in generality, and interprets thus: having given them (certain farewell) charges as persons are wont to do when leaving their friends, or also when leaving this world (ut facere solent, qui ab amicis, vel etiam ex hoc mundo discedunt, Beza). De Wette very properly connects it with the command in verse 4 = Luke 24 48 f. Perhaps the connection is closer than he thought. All agree in rejecting the view of Grotius (mandavit, quae agere deberent per spiritum sanctum), as impossible with the present Greek text; but it shows the lengths to which interpreters have been driven.

The alternative is to refer the troublesome phrase διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου to the verb ἐξελέατο, reading "up to the day when, having given commandment to the apostles whom he had chosen by the Holy Spirit, he was taken up." This is De Wette's conclusion, and he points to the list of the names of the apostles in verse 13, as also to the fact that their Spirit-induced, Spirit-

guided activity is the main theme of the whole book. This view requires an awkward hyperbaton, since the Greek order is ἐντειλάμενος τοῖς ἀποστόλοις διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου οὗς ἐξελέξατο; but he considers that the position of the relative is even worse with the former interpretation than with this one! Otherwise he would construe the disputed phrase with ἐντειλάμενος. The word-order is indeed an outrage to one's sense of Greek style. Professor Torrey's note on the passage recognizes this difficulty, and supposes an effort on the part of the "cautious translator" to preserve an ambiguity existing in the Aramaic, where the words "through the Holy Spirit" "came at the end of the sentence, just before the verb (ἀνελήμφθη)," and in that position "might refer to *either one of the two phrases*, 'giving commandment to the apostles' and 'whom he had chosen.'"<sup>1</sup> He says nothing as to the exegetical difficulties involved, but chooses the second alternative in his translation.<sup>2</sup>

The original Aramaic of the passage undoubtedly had the preposition ܕܝܢ for διὰ (so Torrey: ܕܝܢ ܕܝܢ ܕܝܢ ܕܝܢ). To Luke, the translator, such a phrase could mean only one thing: "through the Holy Spirit." That was one of the established formulæ of Christianity in his day, ranking along with διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, etc., and with a rather similar meaning. Seeing this Aramaic, he almost inevitably translated it into Greek as διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου. And yet this need not have been the meaning in the mind of the Aramaic author. The preposition ܕܝܢ among its many uses has occasionally the sense of "in the case of, in the matter of, in respect to, concerning." And how admirably the translation περὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου would fit the situation in this verse! It gives us at once the content of that otherwise mysterious command, and points unmistakably forward to the fuller statement in verses 4 f., which read: "While

<sup>1</sup> P. 23.<sup>2</sup> P. 60.<sup>3</sup> P. 60.

eating with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father, which (said he) ye heard from me: John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." The "day" in verse 2 is the day of the ascension, and is here briefly indicated by reference to its two chief occurrences: ἐντειλάμενος περὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου and ἀνελήμφθη. From Luke 24 (or its prototype) the Aramaic author seems to have constructed, by means of additions, omissions, and re-statements, the story of a formal ascension, which he dated definitely forty days after the resurrection; and the chief outstanding event of that day was the promise of the Holy Spirit together with the specific directions to wait in Jerusalem for its coming. It is that which gave the story of the ascension its significance in the Aramaic book (Acts 1-15 35). The grand prelude to the whole is the spiritual baptism at Pentecost.<sup>4</sup> And the introduction to the Pentecostal outpouring is the previous promise of it and the charge concerning it on the day of the ascension. It is with this day and the conversation which took place on it that the detailed narrative of the Acts begins (1 4 ff.).<sup>5</sup> All that preceded is passed over; a mere reference to Jesus' words and deeds before this day, and a brief parenthesis explaining how he had been appearing to them for forty days since his crucifixion and telling them various matters connected with the kingdom of God. Of this day, with which the author's task begins and before which only the merest recapitulation is needed, no better description could be given than verse 2 in its amended form: "the day when, having issued instructions to his chosen disciples in regard to the Holy Spirit, he was taken up."

<sup>4</sup> See Case, *Evolution of Early Christianity*, p. 135, for a statement of the underlying symbolism of the Pentecostal narrative.

<sup>5</sup> Torrey, p. 61, regards the καὶ before συναλιζόμενος in 1 4 as representing a redundant Aramaic <sup>1</sup>.

This makes a fitting introduction to the story of the ascension day, which is the introduction to the story of Pentecost, which is the prelude to the whole ecclesiastical history as conceived by this author. But the translator, mistaking **בְּרוּחַא דִּי קוּדְשָׁא** for the customary Christian formula and translating it *διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου*, was thrown completely astray, could not satisfactorily connect the phrase with either the participle or the verb, and registered his confusion by putting the words as far as possible from either. They are separated from *ἐντειλάμενος* by *τοῖς ἀποστόλοις* and from *ἐξελέξατο* by *οὗς*. There could be no better proof that he really did not know what to do with them.

If this be a genuine instance of mistranslation in Acts 1 2, it furnishes further linguistic evidence of a most definite sort in support of Professor Torrey's argument<sup>6</sup> that Luke began to make direct use of his source as far back as verse 1*b*.

A similar though not quite identical example of the same usage of the preposition **בְּ** is reflected in Acts 4 2: *καὶ καταγγέλλειν ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν*, which the best commentators agree in rendering: "to proclaim the resurrection from the dead in the case of Jesus." Luke surely so understood it. If he had supposed it to mean "proclaim the resurrection of others, i.e., believers, from the dead through the instrumentality of Jesus," he would probably have written *διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*. Cf. Acts 13 38, where he has translated an expression of that sort by the words *διὰ τούτου ὑμῖν ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν καταγγέλλεται*. The interpretation of *ἐν* as "in the case of" in 4 2 is supported by such passages as 13 32: "We proclaim to you the good news that the promise which was made to the fathers God has fulfilled for the children by raising up Jesus"; 4 33: "And with great power the apostles bore testimony of the resurrec-

<sup>6</sup> P. 59.

tion of the Lord Jesus"; and in fact by the whole series of passages in which the function of the apostles is that of witnessing to the Christian facts. בְּיֵשׁוּעַ therefore in the original of Acts 4 2, "proclaim the resurrection of the dead as regards Jesus," yields a parallel to בְּרוּחָא דִּי קוֹדְשָׁא in 1 2, "having given the apostles instructions *in regard to the Holy Spirit*."

## II

The second observation turns upon the meaning of a conjunction. Acts 15 14 reads: Συμεὼν ἐξηγήσατο καθὼς πρῶτον ὁ θεὸς ἐπεσκέψατο λαβεῖν ἐξ ἐθνῶν λαὸν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ, which is usually rendered: "Simeon has rehearsed (or declared) how first God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name." This makes of καθὼς an interrogative particle introducing an indirect question, which serves as the grammatical object of ἐξηγήσατο. No commentator, so far as I have been able to discover, notices the word, and no version shows a variant; but Thayer cites the instance with the usual rendering, and Liddell and Scott make a special entry of this passage in Acts as the only case—at least so far as their examples go—in which καθὼς = ὥς. And well they might, for linguistically it is all but an impossibility. Luke uses καθὼς frequently, doubtless as the equivalent of the Aramaic כְּדִי. The very similarity in sound may have attracted him.<sup>7</sup> But when he wishes to introduce an indirect question he knows Greek well enough to employ πῶς, as in 11 13: ἀπήγγειλεν δὲ ἡμῖν πῶς εἶδεν τὸν ἄγγελον. In fact two instances with πῶς occur after the verb διηγῆσατο (9 27; 12 17),

<sup>7</sup>Acts 15 8, 15 *et saepe* illustrate the common Aramaic usage to denote comparison. Acts 7 17 may well reflect the temporal use of כְּדִי meaning "when": καθὼς δὲ ἤγγιζεν ὁ χρόνος, κτλ. Acts 11 29 shows a specialized form of the comparative sense to denote "in proportion as, to the degree that": τῶν δὲ μαθητῶν καθὼς εὐπορεῖτό τις ὥρισαν ἕκαστος, κτλ.

which is only another compound of the root verb used in 15 14, ἐξηγήσατο. The prefixed ἐξ cannot possibly account for the difference in the conjunction following. Nor does the Aramaic usage offer any simple solution. It is no more customary to use כִּי with indirect questions in Aramaic than to use καθώς in such a sense in Greek. Nevertheless, the Semitic use of כִּי and its compounds (e.g., כִּי־כִּי in Hebrew) to denote comparison and correspondence is singularly loose and flexible, covering the whole range of ideas represented in English by "like, as, as if, according to, according as," etc.; and I think that a careful exegesis of the passage in question may show a comparative sense in the word καθώς which will do less violence to the context and yield a more interesting interpretation than the one now current.

Verse 3 has described the journey of Paul and Barnabas toward Jerusalem through Phœnicia and Samaria, "proclaiming the conversion of the Gentiles." Ἐκδιηγούμενοι is the word employed. Arriving at Jerusalem, they report (here ἀπήγγειλαν) the same glad facts at a public meeting of the church. Certain converted Pharisees protest, and the meeting adjourns without decision. Then follows the formal open conference (Acts 15 6 ff.), and after much debate Peter rises to speak.

"Men and brethren, you must understand that in ancient times God chose you,<sup>8</sup> that the Gentiles might hear, by my mouth, the word of the gospel, and might believe." In support of this liberal contention that his Gentile preaching was a part of the original plan of God, Peter now proceeds to relate facts: the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit (i.e., the gift of tongues, which was viewed as the Spirit's chief outward manifestation), and so far as appearances went there was no distinction

<sup>8</sup> Torrey's explanation of ἐν ὑμῖν as really a direct object, ἐν representing the Aramaic כִּי often used in such cases, is inevitable when once it has been suggested.



or difference in this respect between Gentiles and Jews. Why then load them down with the peculiar Jewish laws?

From Peter, one of the original twelve and a recognized leader in the Jerusalem Church, such testimony must have seemed overwhelming, though with some it may have left the mind crushed rather than convinced. At any rate silence ensued. Then Barnabas and Paul began relating what signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through *them*—all of course in support of Peter's original thesis that the Gentile mission was God's plan from the start. Ἐξηγουμένων is the word used of their reports.

James then rises to speak the final word. He passes over the reports of Barnabas and Paul, and goes back to the statements of Peter. "Simeon has made a report," he says in effect (ἐξηγήσατο is Luke's word), "which sounds as if his main contention were correct, viz., that at the very start (πρῶτον, emphatic by position) God looked ahead to take from among the Gentiles a people for his name," i.e., a new "chosen people," the Christians. "And with this view," adds James, "the words of the prophets are in harmony," and he proceeds to quote them.

This interpretation of καθὼς in 15 14 gives to the opening sentence of the speech of James a different emotional quality from that which it otherwise would have, though the essential content of the statement is hardly changed. The grammatical object of ἐξηγήσατο is no longer the clause introduced by καθὼς, which would make a categorical assertion that Peter has proved his point. The object of the verb is left to be supplied, and includes such things as the ἐπιστροφὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν which was the object of ἐκδιηγούμενοι in verse 3, the σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα which was the object of ἐξηγουμένων in verse 12, and in particular the impartial outpouring of the Holy Spirit

which was the main element in Peter's own report (vss. 8 f.). This leaves *καθώς* with a loose and somewhat elliptical force of comparison, "as if," or more fully "in such a way as to imply that," and makes of the decision of James a rather hesitant, slightly grudging admission that the evidence points Peter's way. Such a force would be nothing unusual in Aramaic for the conjunction כִּדְּ (or כִּנְאֻשׁ in Hebrew), and I suspect that Luke caught this meaning and tried to reproduce it in Greek by the use of *καθώς*.

### III

It is just possible that the underlying Aramaic may explain the stubborn textual problem of Acts 2 25. The last verses of chapter 11 have described the sending of Barnabas and Saul from Antioch with aid for the famine sufferers in Jerusalem. Apparently the author knew little or nothing concerning the details of that visit, and so filled in the gap as artistically as he could by describing in chapter 12 the persecuting activity and the death of Herod. Then comes at the end of that chapter the surprising remark: "Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem, having fulfilled their ministration" (ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, πληρώσαντες τὴν διακονίαν). The reading εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, retained here by Westcott and Hort though with a marginal variant of ἐξ for εἰς, is undoubtedly the *lectio ardua* which explains the unusual number of textual variations: ἐξ Ἱερουσαλήμ, ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ, and even εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν. Any one of these would make a smoother text but could not account for the rise of the difficult but well attested εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ. Hence Professor Lake, in his *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*,<sup>9</sup> is inclined to take the verse with this harder reading as a note of time, not referring to the return journey of Barnabas and Saul at all but to their journey Jerusalemward already alluded to in 11 27-30. Thus the passage becomes merely a warning

<sup>9</sup> Pp. 317-319.

to the reader that this "famine visit" really took place *after* the death of Herod. But Professor Lake admits that "such a view is certainly harsh," and he is finally undecided as between this and the assumption of a "primitive error."

With the theory of an underlying Aramaic the field for critical conjecture is suddenly widened, and the notion of primitive corruption in the text takes on a new aspect. It may easily be but another term for mistranslation. Is it possible that in the original of this passage the phrase "to Jerusalem" was meant to be taken with "the ministration" as a virtual dative of advantage, and not as denoting the limit of motion at all? No one on the basis of the Greek text alone would suggest such a construction, but in the Aramaic it is at least conceivable. The most likely preposition would be לְ, whose use in both these senses is too common to require references. The phrase לְיְרוּשָׁלַם coming at the end of the temporal clause would have precisely the ambiguity of this English: "They returned when they had finished their service to Jerusalem." The insertion of a comma after "returned" gives the sentence one meaning, while another comma after "service" alters the sense completely. But this suggestion is not without difficulties of its own. To suppose that the present Greek text with *εἰς* arose from the wrong interpretation of such an original seems to argue an almost incredible stupidity or carelessness on the part of Luke as translator. For here, at least, he has by no means preserved an ambiguity existing in his source. On the contrary, if the *lectio ardua* correctly represents his Greek rendering, he has taken unmistakably the wrong meaning and has made this clear by the position in which he has placed the offending phrase. *Εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ*, standing where it now does in Greek, can mean only one thing, the destination to which Barnabas and Saul returned. This is a hard thing to believe of Luke, and yet in view

of some of the other errors of which he has been convicted it is not wholly unthinkable. If by any chance the original preposition was *עַל* instead of *לְ*, the misunderstanding might be a little more natural. The first impression from *עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם* might indeed be that of direction of motion, while at the same time the meaning "in behalf of, for the sake of" is by no means unexampled. Cf. the Aramaic of Ezra 6 17: *חֲטִיָּא עַל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל*, "sin-offering for all Israel." If Luke reasoned over the passage at all, he may have thought of the messengers as going to various Christian communities outside of Jerusalem in their task of distributing relief, and as then returning to their base at Jerusalem before going off to Antioch. It is more likely, however, that he did not reason deeply over the passage, but simply translated with his eyes shut, so to speak, what he found—or thought he found—in his source. The man who retained the "forty days" of Acts 1 3 in spite of the time references in Luke 24, and who in the story of Paul's conversion translated 9 7 verbatim only to correct it later in 22 9, might have rendered 12 25 with *εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ* because that seemed to be the statement, however strange and unaccountable, of the original. Psychologically this is no more difficult than Professor Lake's suggestion that the verse is a warning as to chronology by an author who regarded the return journey of Barnabas and Saul as too obvious for mention. It is not a perfect solution of the famous textual puzzle, but it deserves to be numbered among the possibilities.

#### IV

Professor Torrey's theory also supplies us for the first time with a rational explanation of the variations in the three accounts of Paul's conversion, in Acts 9 1-19; 22 6-16; and 26 12-15. So far as I have observed, the

only treatment of Acts recent enough to benefit by the new theory is Professor Kent's book on *The Work and Teachings of the Apostles*. But though he seems to accept the demonstration of an Aramaic source for the earlier chapters,<sup>10</sup> he quite overlooks the bearing of this fact on the accounts of the conversion, contenting himself with the usual assertion that the one in chapter 26 is the oldest, that in 22 next, and that in 9 the latest of all.<sup>11</sup> No explanation of this singular literary phenomenon is even attempted.

The accounts have long been observed to disagree, the most glaring discrepancy being that between 9 7: "the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man," and 22 9: "they that were with me beheld the light, but heard not the voice of him that spoke to me." This was bad enough, and yet there were other things that were even more damaging to Luke's reputation as an historian. The account in chapter 9, which he seemed to have composed freely on his own initiative for its present place in the narrative, was observed to be much more highly legendary and romantic than those in chapters 22 and 26, which are introduced into speeches of Paul. In all the accounts there is the same light, followed by the same conversation between Jesus and Paul. But with Paul's blindness chapter 9 8 begins to elaborate: he opened his eyes, but saw nothing, and he spent three days without sight and without food or drink — perhaps a conscious parallel to the experience of Jesus in the tomb (cf. Rom. 6 4; Col. 2 12). As for the Ananias incident, chapter 26 omits it entirely; 22 12 says simply: "One Ananias . . . came to me"; but 9 10-16 gives an elaborate description of a vision that prepared Ananias to go. Within this vision (9 12) there is a reference to Paul's vision, and the conversation between Ananias and the Lord waxes extensive and rather argumentative.

<sup>10</sup> P. 5.<sup>11</sup> P. 75.

Finally Ananias goes and baptizes Paul and heals his blindness. "And straightway," we read, "there fell from his eyes as it were scales"! This is a lovely touch from the pen of some miracle-monger. It used to appear to be Luke's own.

On the new theory, however, Acts 9 1-19 is not Luke's own composition at all, but the translation of an account written by the man who reshaped the ascension narrative and depicted the Christian Pentecost. Whence this author derived the increments of marvel is not easy to determine. He may have invented them himself or have found them present already in some source written or oral. The story of Paul's conversion was doubtless common property, and popular report would not long allow it to lack embellishments. On the other hand, the Aramaic author himself was not bound by a prosaic regard for exactitude, but was perfectly capable of inventing circumstantial details. One remark in 9 17 sounds like his work. "The Lord," he makes Ananias say, ". . . has sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." The writer of the Pentecostal narrative might well have added that.

Now Luke, having translated faithfully this highly colored narrative in chapter 9, comes in chapter 22 to a place where he can set the matter right. He does so on the basis of his own superior knowledge and personal acquaintance with Paul. For one thing he inserts the time of day at which the great event took place (*περὶ μεσημβρίας*, 22 6; cf. 26 12, *ἡμέρας μέσης*), a point which was probably unknown to the Aramaic author. He corrects outright and most explicitly the statement of 9 7 regarding the bystanders, asserting that they saw the light, but did *not* hear the heavenly voice (22 9). This point is stressed again in 26 13, though the element of contradiction is not made so prominent: "I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of

the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice," etc. It is perhaps hardly too much to suppose that this goes back to Paul himself; for the fact that his companions did not hear the voice, far from casting doubt on the authenticity of the occurrence, might to Paul's mind be an actual confirmation of its special personal and private character. He remarks in Gal. 1 16: "It was God's good pleasure . . . to reveal his son *in me*" (ἀποκαλῖψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί). A revelation which Paul alone could hear and understand might very naturally be described in these terms. The account in chapter 22 continues in a simple and straightforward manner. "And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, came unto me, and standing by me, said unto me, 'Brother Saul, receive thy sight.' And in that very hour I received my sight and could see him." Ananias interprets the vision to Paul as a vision of the Messiah ("Righteous One," 22 14) and urges immediate baptism. Later in Jerusalem in the temple while praying, Paul fell into a trance and again saw Jesus, and received his commission to the Gentiles at that time (22 17-21). In all this there is nothing incredible. It requires interpretation from the modern point of view, but there is nothing which, being properly interpreted, the modern historian need reject.

In chapter 26 Luke does not feel the need of being so explicit and detailed. He has already told the full story once in its proper form and set right the wrong impressions which might be derived from the account in his source. He therefore feels at liberty to omit the Ananias incident altogether, and to telescope the two visions of Jesus, the one on the Damascus road (Acts

22 6-11) and the other in the Jerusalem temple (22 17-21), into a single narrative. The commission to the Gentiles (26 16-18) is thus added on directly to the original words of Jesus in his first appearance. This is not serious. Gal. 1 16 would suggest that Paul himself often told the story so. But aside from this — from the ancient point of view harmless — syncopation no significant variation occurs between the two accounts which we owe directly to Luke. No detail is added in Acts 26 which is openly contradictory to Acts 22. To be sure, 26 14 says, “when we were all fallen to the earth”; 22 7, “and I fell to the ground.” But there is no necessary contradiction here. In 22 7 part of the truth — the really significant part — is told; 26 14 tells more, but nothing incompatible. The same may be said of 26 14*b*, which adds the detail that Jesus used the Hebrew language, and said, “It is hard for thee to kick against the goads.” This is an addition, but no necessary contradiction. As between chapter 22 and chapter 26 there is nothing even remotely resembling the contradiction of 9 7 by 22 2.

Professor Torrey's theory seems to furnish a perfect explanation of the peculiar facts in the three accounts of Paul's conversion: their present order, the superior historicity of the accounts in chapters 22 and 26, the superior fulness of that in chapter 22 over that in 26, and the sharp contradictions of the first account by the later ones. This result is an incidental confirmation of the theory itself, although the linguistic evidence alone has furnished all the proof that is needed. And the result for the historian and for the biographer of Paul is also important. We are thrown back, not upon the abbreviated account in chapter 26, but upon the fuller and more detailed account in 22 as the most reliable of all. It is the report not indeed of an eye-witness, but of a close friend and companion of Paul, and may be assumed to record the outward facts of the experience



accurately according to Paul's own memory of them. This is as much as we have a right to expect or hope. The inward psychological facts, which are of so much concern to the modern student, did not interest Luke, and can only be deduced inferentially from the outward course of events. Even when Paul himself attempts an inward interpretation of his experience, as he may do in Rom. 7, the result is so involved with ancient mystical psychology and with Paul's own subsequent reflections as to be of slight value from the modern point of view. It has, however, preserved one fact of crucial importance, namely, that Paul's conversion was not only an intellectual change from disbelief to belief in Jesus' Messiahship, but was also a moral emancipation from the power and sense of sin. From this *moral* aspect of his conversion were developed the deepest implications in Paul's whole system of theology, but the fact seems to have passed completely over the heads of both of the authors of Acts.

## V

A single note of possible disagreement may be added. It is not entirely clear from his discussion on pages 58, 61 ff., whether Professor Torrey means to reject entirely any theory of "doublets" or any tracing of sources whatsoever in the Aramaic Acts. "If," he says, "the fact of translation is granted, it is not likely that any convincing theory of composition will ever be put forth."<sup>12</sup> In general this pessimism is well founded. The literary history of any ancient document is likely to be more complex than any convincing theory which we at this distance can construct. Nevertheless a purely literary criticism may at times achieve solid results. Most of the analyses of Acts, to be sure, have not been encouraging, and Torrey himself has with reason made merry over the theories of Wellhausen, Preuschen, Wendt,

<sup>12</sup> P. 58.

Wendland, and Norden. But the work of Harnack seems to be in a different class. It shows a restraint, a soberness and good sense not always present in the others. His analysis had already led him to break the book in two at chapter 15 35,<sup>13</sup> exactly where the new evidence adduced by Torrey divides it. This is a tribute to Harnack's perspicacity. It was based purely on literary evidence; the linguistic argument did not enter seriously into his calculations. But the division is unequivocally made and underlies the whole further progress of his discussion. And his conclusions show great caution. He believes that in the second half of the book there were no written sources used except the supposed "diary" in the we-sections.<sup>14</sup> In the first half he picks out 6 1-8 4; 11 19-30; 12 25 (13 1)-15 35 as having belonged probably to a single written source,<sup>15</sup> but expressly states that no one of the eleven arguments for this "affords a convincing proof of the written character of the source."<sup>16</sup> He only asserts his impression that part at least, perhaps all, of this source was in writing. Over against this he puts 3 1-5 16; 8 5-40; 9 31-11 8; 12 1-23 as a Jerusalem-Cæsarean, Petro-Philippian source, but expressly says that he is not convinced that they need have formed a single written document which came bodily into the author's hands.<sup>17</sup> He imagines rather that Philip, and perhaps Philip's prophesying daughters, were the living sources for this information. This is a virtual abandonment of any strictly literary theory of analysis. Although the investigations have been most exhaustive, these results are stated very modestly withal, and one feels the sort of difference between such conclusions and the other "critical analyses" of Acts which Professor Harnack himself feels between the miracles in Acts and the wild wonder-stories in the Apocrypha.

<sup>13</sup> Acts of the Apostles, Introd., p. xxxii, n. 1.

<sup>14</sup> P. 232.

<sup>15</sup> P. 245.

<sup>16</sup> P. 246.

<sup>17</sup> Pp. 241-244.

There are two points in the earlier half of Acts at which literary criticism would seem to be capable of results approaching certainty. The more pretentious efforts of Harnack issue, by his own confession, in little more than general probability, but the derivation of the ascension narrative from Luke 24 and the recognition of a doublet in Acts 4 and 5 17-42, produce a greater feeling of assurance. The theory of translation tends actually to support the former, while it has no apparent bearing either way upon the latter.

The detection of doublets in the two stories of imprisonment in Acts 4 and 5 17-42 turns not upon style at all, but upon content and arrangement. The resemblances are much closer than in any other supposed case in the book of Acts. Peter is involved both times. The priests and Sadducees are the prime movers (4 1; 5 17). The arrest occurs on one day (4 3, late in the afternoon; 5 18, not specifying the hour), and the next morning there is a formal hearing before the Sanhedrin (4 5; 5 21 ff.). After a time they are sent out while the Sanhedrin deliberates (4 15; 5 34). Both times they are severely threatened and let go (4 18, 21; 5 40). But if the resemblances in the events are significant, the differences in tone and attitude are almost more so. The first account (Acts 4) is simple, straightforward, and non-miraculous—except as it is connected with the supposed miracle of the lame man. The second account is heightened at every point. It is not Peter and John, but Peter and the apostles that suffer imprisonment. They do not spend the night in prison, but are released by an angel and are found by the astonished officer at daybreak preaching in the temple. The marvel of the shut doors and watching keepers is dwelt on with evident delight (5 23). At the words of Peter the officials are cut to the heart just as on the day of Pentecost, and think of slaying the offenders, whereas

in chapter 4 the officials are merely surprised at the boldness of Peter and John. The scene behind the closed doors of the council is described in full with the dramatic and demonstrably unhistorical appeal of Gamaliel, whereas 4 16 f. is most restrained on this point. The disciples in chapter 4 are merely threatened and charged, but in chapter 5 they are beaten and charged, and they go away with an exalted sense of martyrdom in a holy cause, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name" (5 41). In chapter 4 they go home and tell their friends all that has happened to them, but in 5 42 they flaunt their defiance in the face of the authorities: "Every day they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ."

These facts have often been observed, and furnish strong indication that we are really dealing with a single incident. That they are in any way adversely affected by the theory of translation is not apparent. If it were a question of piece-work translation, one bit from one Aramaic document and another from another with editorial matter introduced by the Greek writer, the case would be different. But if the whole of Acts 1-15 35 has been taken over literally from a single Aramaic source, then all the arguments based on the structure and arrangement of material remain as they were before.

Professor Torrey himself has called attention<sup>18</sup> to the series of close resemblances between Acts 1 1-11 and Luke 24 36-49: Jesus' earnest efforts to prove to his followers that he is still alive (Acts 1 3; Luke 24 26, 34, 39-40, 45 f.), his actual eating with them (*συναλιζόμενος*, Acts 1 4; Luke 24 41-43, cf. also 30), the universal mission beginning from Jerusalem (Acts 1 8; Luke 24 47), the command to wait in the city for the Father's promise (Acts 1 4; Luke 24 49), the two men in white apparel — angels, according to Luke 24 23 — who explain the true significance of events to the dazed disciples

<sup>18</sup> P. 24.

(Acts 1 10, at the time of the ascension; Luke 24 4, at the tomb on the resurrection morning), and the geographical indications (Acts 1 12, "the mount called Olivet"; Luke 24 50, "over against Bethany," the road to which leads past the Mount of Olives). But along with these similarities there are discrepancies, of which the most glaring is the note of time. Acts 1 3 certainly sets the ascension at the close of a period of forty days of appearances, while an unbroken chain of time-references in Luke 24 1, 13, 21, 29, 33, 36 ff. seems to place the ascension on the evening of the resurrection day. However, the true text of Luke 24 51 does not describe a genuine ascension at all. The best texts omit *καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν*, as well as *προσκυνήσαντες αὐτόν*, so that the passage reads: "And it came to pass while he blessed them, he parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple blessing God." That is simply a mystical parting at the end of a vision, exactly as had been the parting from the two disciples with whom he had gone in to take supper (Luke 24 30 f.). In the original text of Luke the latter of these partings is no more a formal ascension than the former, though it is given a setting which does suggest finality (cf. Luke 24 44, "These are my words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you"). The textual variations are to be ascribed to the tendency toward accommodation. But no harmonizer has successfully gotten rid of the "forty days," and no modern interpreter was able to explain that divergence so long as Luke was supposed to be the author of both Luke 24 and Acts 1.

The problem is enormously simplified by the new theory of translation. Since this applies as much to Luke 24 as to Acts 1, we need not suppose that the author of the Aramaic Acts read Luke's gospel in Greek, but only that he knew the Aramaic source from which

Luke 24 was translated.<sup>19</sup> Since Luke's habit as a translator was one of extreme faithfulness, we may compare the two passages with great confidence that in content, at least, they have suffered little change. It would appear that the author of Acts 1 1-11 has reduced the previous story considerably, has rearranged the order of some details, and has adapted the whole to the purposes of a new apologetic. This is really the most fundamental difference between the two narratives, outranking even such matters as the reference to the "forty days"—or rather comprehending and explaining them. The main purpose of the story as it appears in Luke 24 is to justify the belief in Jesus' Messiahship: he suffered and died, yet nevertheless he was the Christ in full accordance with the Old Testament prophecies (vss. 26 f., 44-46). That was practically the first great problem for Christian theology, to make the crucifixion not a bar to belief in Jesus' Messiahship but a veritable proof of it. Incidentally there is an effort to depict the resurrection as a very real thing, and to guard against the supposition that Jesus might be merely a ghostly spirit (vss. 36-43). The content of Christian preaching at this stage is also indicated: "Repentance unto remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (vs. 47). This shows the religious goal, the remission of sins at the time of the great world-judgment. It gives point and purpose to what would otherwise be a mere historical witnessing to certain facts regarding the crucifixion and resurrection.

But by the time the Aramaic Acts were written<sup>20</sup> new problems had arisen, and these narratives of a decade or two previous are seen in a different light. The thing which catches this author's attention, as he

<sup>19</sup> So Torrey, *Translations from the Aramaic Gospels*, in the volume of *Studies in the History of Religions* dedicated to Professor Toy, p. 316: "It is obvious . . . that this whole chapter is translated."

<sup>20</sup> "Late in the year 49, or early in the year 50," according to Torrey, p. 68.

scans them through, is not the attempted proof of Jesus' Messiahship from the scriptures, but the "promise of the Father," which he understands as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The saying of John the Baptist also he interprets in the same way, and works it into the story at an appropriate point. What John originally said was undoubtedly: "I baptize you with water, but there comes a stronger than I, whose shoe-lace I am not worthy to untie; he shall baptize you with fire." Luke 3 16 shows already an expansion of the saying in the light of later developments: "I baptize you with water, but . . . he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The author of the Aramaic Acts makes a further adaptation by leaving out the fire, and even goes so far as to put the saying into the mouth of the risen Jesus (Acts 1 4 ff.). Following this he introduces a brief but edifying colloquy (vss. 6 f.) designed to set at rest the troubling doubts regarding the time of the parousia. The coming kingdom had been long delayed. Many were anxious. Many had even fallen away. For the benefit of his own contemporaries therefore this author makes Jesus say, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father has set within his own authority." Verses 10 f. have the same intent: the two men in white say with the utmost assurance that Jesus shall return exactly as he now goes up into heaven.

But after all the real answer to the growing doubt is not by direct argument. It is rather by a substitution of interest. As I have suggested above, the main purpose of the ascension narrative is to prepare the way for the great events on Pentecost. Not only is the mystical parting of Luke 24 51 made into a formal ascension, but the conversation is made to turn primarily on the need of waiting in Jerusalem for the spiritual endowment. In Luke 24 there had been no mention of

the Holy Spirit. It is not likely that at that early stage the glossolalia, interpreted as a sign of the Spirit, had attained anything like its importance in the later church. It may have already made its appearance; the natural place to look for its spontaneous origin would be in the eager and excited groups looking for the end of the age. But it is doubtful if the "promise of the Father," for which the disciples are instructed to tarry in Jerusalem, is thought of in Luke 24 49 as the gift of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is nowhere mentioned in this chapter, nor is there any reflection of the glossolalia unless it be found in the "endowment with power from on high" in this same verse. The likelihood is that the expected "promise of the Father" was really the kingdom itself, and that the earliest disciples felt that Jesus had charged them to wait in Jerusalem for his own parousia. We read in verses 52 f. that they went back to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God. Is it not likely that their joy was over the assurance that Jesus was alive and the kingdom was so near? What is meant by the "endowment of power from on high" (5 49) is not certain. It may simply be that eschatological "power" which in the Lord's prayer itself is connected with the kingdom and the glory. If it does refer to the baptism of the Spirit, observe how incidentally it comes in. It is far from being the focus of interest and attention that it is in Acts 1 and 2.

Two decades of waiting had made a profound difference in the attitude of the expectant community. The delay had by no means destroyed the eschatological hope, but it had somewhat dulled the edge of it. Remote interests weigh little with any kind of men, and perhaps least of all with the unlearned and ignorant; and already there is beginning within Christianity a shift from that other-worldly expectation to objects more immediately attainable. The glossolalia supplied just



that need. Those first days of waiting and longing for the great cataclysm must have been a season of intense excitement. The glossolalia might then indeed for the first time have broken out. If the Messianic parousia had also then taken place, the glossolalia, needless to remark, would have been passed by without further comment. But the end did not come. The days of excited expectation passed, and the great crisis with its terrors and its searching judgment did not materialize. One new thing, however, had materialized. The glossolalia had made its appearance. It seemed to be a special mark of divine interest. The persons affected felt that a divine power had seized hold of them and literally spoken through them. This was the beginning of that peculiar type of spiritual baptism which came to be regarded as the distinctive sign of God's favor, that which marked God's acceptance of the new converts and showed his continued interest in the old ones. Thus while the day of judgment still delayed to come, it was possible for the believer to find the immediate and present satisfaction of his religious needs in this gift of the Holy Spirit. The cultivation of the glossolalia, religiously interpreted as the gift of God, came to fill a large place in the life of the early Christian community. In Paul's time the Christian water-baptism was not regarded as valid unless accompanied by this sign (cf. Acts 19 1-7), though there were followers of Jesus then in existence who had not so much as heard whether there was a Holy Spirit (5 2).

The author of the Aramaic Acts lived in this later age, and was an enthusiastic believer in the baptism of the Spirit with its accompanying glossolalia. He therefore interprets the "promise of the Father" and the "endowment with power from on high" in Luke 24 49 as referring to this manifestation, and supposes the gift of the Spirit to have been the first great event in ecclesias-

tical history. Its origin he regards as the virtual origin of the church, the time of God's definite indication that the conquering career of Christianity had begun. It is not necessary in this connection to discuss at length the symbolism of the Christian Pentecost and its manifest correspondences to the midrashic view of the Old Testament Pentecost as the time of the giving of the law. Professor Case in his "Evolution of Early Christianity" thus describes the parallelism: "The forty days of waiting by the disciples are the same as Moses' period of preparation in Sinai (Ex. 24 18); the thunder and lightning, with the voice of God coming from the midst of the fire, correspond to the roaring sound and tongues of flame in Acts (Ex. 20 18 ff.; Dt. 5 4 f.; 33 2 f.; Ps. 68 8); and the proclamation of the gospel in different languages repeats the midrashic representation of the manner in which the law was promulgated from Sinai, when seventy voices proclaimed it to as many different peoples, but all save Israel rejected."<sup>21</sup> On such presuppositions as these was our author working when he rewrote the narrative of Luke 24 as a formal ascension and recast that day's conversation as a prelude to the Christian Pentecost. It may be observed in passing that John 20 19-23 presents another version of the affair, also based on Luke 24. This account says that on the evening of the day on which he rose from the dead Jesus met his disciples in a closed room and breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20 22). From this multiplication of accounts regarding its origin we can judge the importance of the Spirit in this primitive religious life. They furnish a perfect background for the protests of Paul in 1 Cor. 12-14.

To turn to our literary problem, a particularly telltale bit of evidence is the reference in Acts 1 12 to the Mount of Olives. After the ascension we read: "Then re-

<sup>21</sup> P. 135.

turned they to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet." This is apparently the form given to the Lukan statement, "He led them out over against Bethany" (Luke 24 50), but it comes in peculiarly and unexpectedly. *Συναλιζόμενος* in verse 4 certainly suggests that the conversation took place indoors; presumably the "upper room" of verse 13 was in the author's mind. The question and answer of verses 6-8 seem to follow at once and quite naturally. Then in verse 9, "When he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up." Nowhere between verse 4 and verse 11 is there any suggestion of a change of scene,<sup>22</sup> but in verse 12 comes suddenly the statement that they returned from the mount called Olivet. The fact seems to be that the Aramaic author, in remodelling his narrative from Luke 24, has been guilty of an oversight, and betrays himself by neglecting to indicate the transition from Jerusalem to the scene of the supposed ascension.

On these two points, the literary relations between Luke 24 and Acts 1 1-11 and between Acts 4 and 5 17-42, something approaching certainty seems attainable. In pronouncing against theories of composition for Acts Professor Torrey may not have had such minor matters as these in mind. He may have been thinking of those elaborate reconstructions such as Professor Harnack has built up only to decide that they are too shaky for permanent habitations. But the demonstration of doublets in Acts 4 and 5 shows us plainly the nature of the sources which the Aramaic author had to employ, while the comparison of his ascension narrative with the last chapter of Luke gives us interesting though fragmentary glimpses into his very workshop.

<sup>22</sup> Unless indeed *οἱ μὲν οὖν συνεληθόντες* is meant to indicate a transition and should be translated: "They, having gone with him," or, Aramaic tenses being vague, "as they were going with him." But Torrey, p. 24, takes it as "those who were present."